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# Regional Council Activity Report

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May 11, 1999

Briefing to Member Agencies from Executive Director James M. Bourey



## Executive Director's Report

If ever there was a white-knuckle month for the Maricopa Association of Governments, April was it. MAG staff worked non-stop to deal with issues relating to air quality conformity, the Vehicle Emissions Inspection Program, freeway financing, elimination of the region's ability to extend the half-cent sales tax, a debate over HOV lanes, and more. But while April came in like a lion and seemed to want to stay that way, its closing days finally brought us a few desperately-needed lambs.

Perhaps the most significant development came when the U.S. Department of Transportation reaffirmed approval of the October 20, 1998 conformity finding for the MAG regional transportation plan and FY 1999-2003 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The reaffirmation was based on several factors, including MAG's submission on April 22, 1999 of a supplemental conformity analysis which demonstrated conformity, an April 27, 1999 letter to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) which outlined transportation and emission models used in the conformity findings, and a description of the public process involved. Additional help came from a letter by the Environmental Protection Agency to the FHWA agreeing with the supplemental analysis. Had the conformity finding not been reaffirmed, all regionally significant federally-funded and non-federally-funded transportation projects would have been at risk. Huge praise needs to be heaped on MAG air quality and transportation staff, who put in many long hours scrambling to put together the documentation needed to avert a conformity lapse. This sudden and unexpected workload came directly on the heels of the preparation of the Air Quality Plans for Carbon Monoxide and PM-10, for which staff had already worked overtime for weeks to put together these 3,000-page documents. I am extremely proud of our employees for continually going the extra mile to serve this region.

Another important victory was finally reached in the halls of the state legislature, with the passage of House Bill 2254 to extend the Vehicle Emissions Inspection Program through July 1, 2009. The EPA had notified the region that our Long Range Transportation Plan, which covers a 20-year time frame,

could not take credit for the VEIP as part of its air quality conformity plan because the legislation authorizing the program included a three-year sunset clause. Thanks to strong support from the Governor's Office and MAG member agencies, the extended sunset was passed May 5th.

We had mixed success in the passage of Senate Bill 1201. While it provided the freeway financing mechanisms necessary to accelerate the Regional Freeway System, it included an amendment to eliminate the region's ability to extend the half-cent sales tax. This could be a significant roadblock to our ability to provide an adequate transit system in the region in the coming years. Some difficult choices may lie ahead in determining how we will best meet our transit needs.

Our final major issue of the month came in seeking the passage of our five-year, \$3.5 billion Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and 20-year Long Range Transportation Plan. After a thoughtful debate over how to best manage future congestion, the Regional Council voted to approve the TIP and Plan for conformity analysis. The vote came after lengthy dialogue centering on whether the plan should include High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lanes along the Superstition Freeway. (See Meeting Report below).



## **Regional Council Meeting Report for April 28, 1999**

### **Council Approves TIP and Plan Following Debate**

The main agenda items for the April 28th Regional Council meeting centered on the draft Fiscal Year 2000-2004 MAG Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the MAG Long Range Transportation Plan (Plan) for conformity analysis. About a dozen residents from the City of Tempe showed up at the meeting to voice their opposition to the plan, saying that adding the lanes would require widening the freeway near their homes and cause noise and safety concerns. Council members maintained that the addition of the HOV lanes would encourage carpooling and express bus ridership, which are critical to reducing congestion and improving air quality. In addition, it was pointed out that removal of the Superstition HOV project could jeopardize the region's ability to meet federal air quality standards. The Council voted 23-3 to approve the program as recommended, including the HOV lanes.

**For more information, contact Dennis Smith, Assistant Director, (602) 254-6300.**

### **Letter of Concern to be Sent to Census Bureau**

The Regional Council agreed to forward a letter to the Census Bureau expressing concern with delays to Census Bureau programs related to Census 2000. The Bureau has missed a number of deadlines for distributing essential information to cities and towns that will be needed to prepare for the Census. This includes boundary and annexation surveys, address files, and maps of census geography. The letter encourages the Census Bureau to eliminate delays and implement the measures necessary to achieve a successful census.

**For more information, contact Harry Wolfe, Socioeconomic Program Manager, (602) 254-6300.**



### **Upcoming Issues**

#### **Parties Agree to New Transportation Planning and Programming Process**

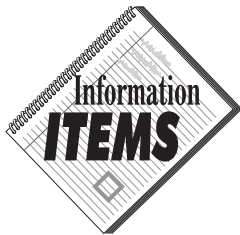
In light of the changes to the planning and programming responsibilities resulting from the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, on April 30th representatives of the Arizona Department of Transportation, Councils of Government (COGs) and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) from across the state met in the city of Casa Grande to discuss implementation of a new regionally-based transportation planning and programming process. Attendees included MAG, the Arizona Department of Transportation, the Pima Association of Governments (PAG), the Northern Arizona COG, the Central Arizona Association of Governments, the Western Arizona COG, the South Eastern Arizona Governments Organization, the Yuma MPO, the Flagstaff MPO, the Regional Public Transportation Authority, PAG Area Transit, and the Federal Highway Administration.

The parties agreed to establish a revenue allocation process with representation from ADOT, Traffic Management Areas, MPOs/COGs and transit operators. They also pledged to move ahead aggressively with the development of a statewide Long Range Transportation Plan. The recommendations, known as the "Casa Grande Resolves," also identified the guiding principles to be used under the new process. Formal presentations on the principles and the process will be presented to the MAG Management Committee April 12th, and to the Regional Council May 26th.

**For more information, contact Dennis Smith, Assistant Director, (602) 254-6300.**

### **Draft Regional Domestic Violence Plan to be Presented to Council**

The MAG Domestic Violence Subcommittee has finalized draft recommendations to be included in the Regional Domestic Violence Plan, after reviewing public comment received during a public hearing held at MAG March 23rd. The plan contains 41 recommendations proposed by a group of 150 professionals and individuals who spent four months working on the plan. The recommendations will be presented to the Regional Council May 26th. The plan was originally slated to be considered at the April 28th Regional Council meeting, but was delayed because of the lengthy discussion of other agenda items. **For more information, contact Carol Kratz, MAG Human Services Manager, (602) 254-6300.**



### **Information Items**

#### **Y2K Forum Focuses on Communication**

On April 22nd, the Maricopa Association of Governments held the first of a series of forums dealing with issues surrounding the Year 2000 computer problem. The forum featured presentations by three speakers. Danny Murphy, Director of the Information and Technology Department for the City of Phoenix, reported on some of the significant strides taken by the city in addressing Y2K issues. Toni Maccarone, Public Information Officer for the City of Phoenix, explained how public information representatives across the Valley were working together to provide accurate and consistent information to the public and to answer citizens' most frequently asked questions. And Roy Levenda, Chairman of the MAG 9-1-1 Oversight Committee, discussed regional efforts to address any impact on fire and emergency services.

Future forums will focus on how the Y2K problem may affect banking, utilities, health care, pharmaceutical companies, grocery stores, human services, and police, as well as how to prepare for potential legal issues.

**For more information, please contact Kelly Taft at (602) 254-6300.**

#### **MAG Selected as Demonstration Community for Clean Air Campaign**

The Maricopa Association of Governments has been selected to participate as a demonstration community in "It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air," a new federally-sponsored public education and partnership-building initiative on the connection between transportation choices, congestion and air quality.

The federal partners, including the Federal Highway Administration, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Mobile Sources and the Federal Transit Administration, received more than 70 proposals for this unique campaign. MAG is one of only fourteen communities selected to participate, and will receive a \$25,000 grant to support program implementation.

**For more information, contact Kelly Taft, MAG Public Communications Program Manager, (602) 254-6300.**



## **Upcoming Events**

### **Pedestrian Projects Receive Funding**

Safety, mobility and accessibility are the focus of three pedestrian projects recommended to receive funding by the MAG Regional Council. Three projects in Gila Bend, Peoria and Phoenix will receive \$150,000 in design assistance. The funding comes as part of an ongoing commitment by MAG to encourage the development of pedestrian facilities. The three projects to receive funding include: \$25,000 to the Town of Gila Bend for Central Pedestrian Way; \$65,000 to the City of Peoria for a Pedestrian Crossing at Grand Avenue and the rail line of the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe near Peoria Avenue; and \$60,000 to the City of Phoenix for the Laveen Watercourse/Greenbelt Pedestrian Trail.

**For more information contact Dawn Coomer, Transportation Planner, (602) 254-6300.**

### **Next Regional Council Meeting**

The next Regional Council meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 26, 1999 at 5:00 p.m. Agenda items will include a presentation of the new transportation programming process defined by Casa Grande Resolves; a recommendation to adopt the FY 2000 MAG Unified Planning Work Program and Annual Budget; and a presentation for approval of the MAG Regional Domestic Violence Plan.

**For more information, contact Dennis Smith, MAG Assistant Director, (602) 254-6300.**